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US Department of the Interior ▼ Bureau of Land Management ▼ Oregon State Office  
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BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
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**BLM Considers “Working Landscape” Grazing Policy Changes,  
Portland Meeting Set to Seek Public Input in Developing Ideas**

To improve the long-term health and productivity of the public rangelands, the Bureau of Land Management is considering grazing policy changes that would provide more management flexibility and promote innovative partnerships, BLM Director Kathleen Clarke announced today. These potential policy changes would complement the various grazing regulatory changes that the BLM is already considering.

Clarke noted that the BLM recently published two grazing-related documents in the *Federal Register* that deal with possible regulation changes. (For details on these documents, see the BLM’s Web site at [www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov).) “Along with our regulatory effort,” Clarke said, “other grazing policy changes – some of which can be carried out within existing grazing rules – are also vitally important to consider.”

The policy changes under the BLM’s consideration, like the potential regulatory changes announced in the *Federal Register* on March 3, are aimed at promoting citizen-based stewardship of the public lands. The potential policy changes would provide more options and flexibility for resource managers, ranchers, conservationists, and others to work in partnership to achieve healthier Western rangelands.

The policy changes comprise what the BLM is calling its “Sustaining Working Landscapes” initiative. By “working landscapes,” the BLM means landscapes on the public lands that are both economically productive and environmentally healthy.

Central to the initiative is the idea of “Reserve Common Allotments,” a new type of grazing unit. These allotments would be created with ranchers cooperatively and voluntarily to promote healthier grazing lands and to help ranchers who temporarily cannot use their permits for various reasons. Grazing permittees could use these reserve allotments for livestock forage while their regular allotments undergo range improvement. Existing regulations, however, would limit implementation of this concept for use by the BLM, individuals, livestock grazing associations, and non-profit third parties. As a result, the BLM is considering rules changes that would overcome current limits on action, thus enhancing the ability of the Bureau and its partners to promote sustainable rangelands and sustainable ranching.

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Another key idea is that of "Conservation Partnerships," under which a grazing permit holder could, on a strictly voluntary basis, enter into a performance-based contract with the BLM aimed at promoting environmental health. Performance-based actions would include those that help restore stream banks and wetlands, enhance the quality and quantity of water flow, improve wildlife or fisheries habitat, and support the recovery of species listed as threatened or endangered. In return, the grazing permittee would be eligible for such things as stewardship grants, management flexibility within certain prescribed limits, and the potential for increased livestock grazing made possible by successes in conservation efforts.

"These conservation partnerships are a good example of what President Bush calls 'citizen stewardship,'" Clarke said. "This type of stewardship consists of voluntary, cooperative efforts by citizens to improve the landscapes around them."

The BLM is considering several other policy changes, including:

- Voluntary allotment restructuring, which would merge grazing allotments of two permittees. One of the permittees temporarily would not graze, while the other would graze his or her herd over the newly combined area. The net result would be lighter grazing use over the entire area, thus improving range conditions while sustaining a working landscape.

- Conservation easement acquisition (that is, the obtaining of voluntary land-use restrictions). Under this exchange system, the BLM would offer grazing permittees the opportunity to acquire lands already identified for "disposal" through the BLM's land-use planning process; in return, permittees would place conservation easements on their adjacent private land. The aim would be to preserve open space and better manage landscapes and watersheds. The BLM is also examining the concept of acquiring conservation easements with funds that could potentially be made available from land-disposal revenues.

"We believe that these policy concepts, along with the input and ideas we will be seeking from the public, will enhance the BLM's management of grazing as part of sustainable working landscapes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century," Clarke said.

To gather comments on these policy ideas, the BLM's State Directors will be holding grazing policy development workshops across the West from March 31 to April 25. Those interested in participating in these workshops should check with their State or local BLM office for details. The Bureau will also hold a workshop in Washington, D.C., during this period.

**The Portland meeting will be held April 24, 2003, 7:00 pm –9:00 pm, at the Doubletree Hotel, Lloyd Center. The event will be in the Weidler/Halsey room in the main hotel complex located at 1000 N.E. Multnomah Blvd. (Lloyd Center MAX stop, or exit 302A from Interstate 5), Portland, Oregon. For further information, contact Craig Mackinnon at BLM; (503) 808-6157.**

The BLM, an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior, manages more land – 262 million surface acres -- than any other Federal agency. Most of this public land is located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The Bureau, with a budget of about \$1.9 billion and a workforce of some 10,000 full-time, permanent employees, also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources on the public lands.